

NEW SYMBOLS.

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THE SNAKE-CHARMER.

I.

THE forest rears on lifted arms
  A world of leaves, whence verdurous light
Shakes through the shady depths and warms
  Proud tree and stealthy parasite,
There where those cruel coils enclasp
The trunks they strangle in their grasp.

II.

An old man creeps from out the woods,
  Breaking the vine's entangling spell;
He thrids the jungle's solitudes
  O'er bamboos rotting where they fell;
Slow down the tiger's path he wends
Where at the pool the jungle ends.

III.

No moss-greened alley tells the trace
  Of his lone step, no sound is stirred,
Even when his tawny hands displace
  The boughs, that backward sweep unheard:
His way as noiseless as the trail
Of the swift snake and pilgrim snail.

IV.

The old snake-charmer,—once he played
  Soft music for the serpent's ear,
But now his cunning hand is stayed ;
  He knows the hour of death is near.
And all that live in brake and bough,
All know the brand is on his brow.

V.

Yet where his soul is he must go :
  He crawls along from tree to tree.
The old snake-charmer, doth he know
  If snake or beast of prey he be ?
Bewildered at the pool he lies
And sees as through a serpent's eyes.

VI.

Weeds wove with white-flowered lily crops
Drink of the pool, and serpents hie
To the thin brink as noonday drops,
And in the froth-daubed rushes lie.
There rests he now with fastened breath
'Neath a kind sun to bask in death.

VII.

The pool is bright with glossy dyes
And cast-up bubbles of decay:
A green death-leaven overlies
Its mottled scum, where shadows play
As the snake's hollow coil, fresh shed,
Rolls in the wind across its bed.

VIII.

No more the wily note is heard
  From his full flute—the riving air
That tames the snake, decoys the bird,
  Worries the she-wolf from her lair.
Fain would he bid its parting breath
Drown in his ears the voice of death.

IX.

Still doth his soul's văgue longing skim
  The pool beloved: he hears the hiss
That siffles at the sedgy rim,
  Recalling days of former bliss,
And the death-drops, that fall in showers,
Seem honied dews from shady flowers.

X.

There is a rustle of the breeze
  And twitter of the singing bird;
He snatches at the melodies
  And his faint lips again are stirred:
The olden sounds are in his ears;
But still the snake its crest uprears.

XI.

His eyes are swimming in the mist
  That films the earth like serpent's breath
And now,—as if a serpent hissed,—
  The husky whisperings of Death
Fill ear and brain—he looks around—
  Serpents seem matted o'er the ground.

XII.

Soon visions of past joys bewitch
  His crafty soul; his hands would set
Death's snare, while now his fingers twitch
  The tasselled reed as 'twere his net.
But his thin lips no longer fill
The woods with song; his flute is still.

XIII.

Those lips still quaver to the flute,
  But fast the life-tide ebbs away;
Those lips now quaver and are mute,
  But nature throbs in breathless play:
Birds are in open song, the snakes
Are watching in the silent brakes.

XIV.

In sudden fear of snares unseen
The birds like crimson sunset swarm,
All gold and purple, red and green,
And seek each other for the charm.
Lizards dart up the feathery trees
Like shadows of a rainbow breeze.

XV.

The wildered birds again have rushed
Into the charm,—it is the hour
When the shrill forest-note is hushed,
And they obey the serpent's power,—
Drawn to its gaze with troubled whirr,
As by the thread of falconer.

XVI.

As 'twere to feed, on slanting wings
  They drop within the serpent's glare :
Eyes flashing fire in burning rings
  Which spread into the dazzled air;
They flutter in the glittering coils ;
The charmer dreads the serpent's toils.

XVII.

While Music swims away in death
  Man's spell is passing to his slaves :
The snake feeds on the charmer's breath,
  The vulture screams, the parrot raves,
The lone hyena laughs and howls,
The tiger from the jungle growls.

XVIII.

Then mounts the eagle—flame-flecked folds
Belt its proud plumes; a feather falls:
He hears the death-cry, he beholds
The king-bird in the serpent's thralls,
He looks with terror on the feud,—
And the sun shines through dripping blood.

XIX.

The deadly spell a moment gone—
Birds, from a distant Paradise,
Strike the winged signal and have flown,
Trailing rich hues through azure skies:
The serpent falls; like demon wings
The far-out branching cedar swings.

XX.

The wood swims round; the pool and skies
  Have met; the death-drops down that cheek
Fall faster; for the serpent's eyes
  Grow human, and the charmer's seek.
A gaze like man's directs the dart
Which now is buried at his heart.

XXI.

The monarch of the world is cold:
  The charm he bore has passed away:
The serpent gathers up its fold
  To wind about its human prey.
The red mouth darts a dizzy sting,
And clenches the eternal ring.

PYTHAGORAS.

I.

'Twas not the hour of death the Master feared :
He oft had died before, his soul had passed
Through many moulds, as each new cycle neared
Hoping the Golden Day had come at last.

II.

But like a giant 'neath the weight of age
Hope was bowed down, and oft he ceased to see
Among the spheres the looked for heritage
Where he might rest from earth's illusions free.

III.

Whither doth this metempsychosis tend?
  Doubt stirs the heavy question in his breast.
All that begins is toiling towards its end;
  Oblivion hath for all its day of rest.

IV.

And when a universe of death absorbs
  Into its hungry vortex all that is:
The compact colonies of settled orbs,
  The untamed meteors of the free abyss;

V.

And when, at length, the lamp of day is spent,
  And the charred air of night supplants the skies,
What were the soul without its tenement,—
  Without these feeling hands, these seeing eyes?

VI.

Even the blest dawn he once had hoped to find
  May rise while he in darkness dwells below;
Yes, all may fail him now; the troubled mind
  May end at last, and not its ending know.

VII.

Such were the thoughts that while his death-hour grew
  Had pressed into his heart such poignant pangs
As even the lordliest intellect subdue
  When life, yet wavering, in the balance hangs.

VIII.

'Tis past: A cycle's lustres have run out
  And his unquickened soul in ashes sleeps,
Perturbed no longer by the wasting doubt,
  Weak as a babe ere in the womb it leaps;

IX.

Still as a vessel stranded by the tide
  In shallows whereunto no waters drift,
Looming at anchor on its mouldering side
  That neither winds disturb nor billows lift.

X.

Yet throes half-stir the drowsings of the grave,
  As when one turns in sleep with heavy sense
That what suspended being he may have
  Is better, yet awhile, with Providence.

XI.

But all is like the passing of a breath.
  No eager promptings snatch the loosened thread
Wherein is meshed the memory of death;
  He knows himself, but not that he is dead.

XII.

Another cycle bears the cumbrous night
  Unbroken, save as funeral clouds may roll
Which for a moment cross the path of light:
  So shines the ethereal darkness of his soul.

XIII.

While through the mists of death the cycles shone,—
  His soul benumbed, in utter silence hushed,
Advancing time-like through oblivion,
  Still pace for pace with all that o'er him rushed,—

XIV.

Unto his grave a sense of nature came,
  But with no conscious meaning or surprise:
'Twas the old flutter of the dying flame,
  Tremulousness of being without eyes.

XV.

At last a voice, familiar as to seem
His own, heard in his sleep and heeded not,
Broke through the patient whisper of his dream,
With things to be remembered or forgot.

XVI.

It presages some mighty morrow near
When his long baffled soul once more shall rise:
The muffled cycles fall upon his ear,
And his dust flutters with the centuries.

XVII.

Awake, Pythagoras, it seems to say,—
The looked-for morn is breaking o'er the earth:
It grows, it brightens to the perfect day;
Behold man's resurrectionary birth!

XVIII.

His thoughts take shape, his pent-up senses move,
His soul looks out from that abysmal sleep.
Lo ! shadows of the living world above
Before his eyes in dreamy pageant sweep.

XIX.

And in the midst there shone a god-like youth,
Who on his brow the Crown of Sorrow wore ,
And there was meekness, innocence, and truth ;—
Eidolon of his highest hope of yore.

XX.

Hath it then come at last, the world of peace ?
Hath he awakened to that ampler life
Where hate and lust of blood shall ever cease,
And all the bitter days of human strife ?

XXI.

Even so it seemed, when, hark! the upper air
Rang to the battle's rage—the soldier's tread
Echoes above his tomb! In dark despair
He turns his face unto the silent dead.

XXII.

Better to die for aye than wake to find
Men blind to light and deaf to nature's hymn.
These days of man, why let them vex the mind?
God's spheral music falls on senses dim.

XXIII.

The Master sleeps—the ages onward roll—
O twice nine stormy cycles since o'er-past!
Bore ye through eddying lives and deaths a soul
Still dreaming towards its Golden Day at last?

XXVI.

The heavens are as they were, the sun, unworn,
Seems on the blue of yesterday to rest,
And drops below ; but when shall come the morn
He dreamt of, when shall break that morrow blest ?

ECCE HOMO!

I.

He strikes his staff to find his way,
He feels but may not see the day.
The warm sun floods his sightless eyes
That tremble in answer to the skies:
Yet oft he stays as if to look
  At memories of the scenes of yore,—
  The vine and fig-tree at his door,
The pleasant places by the brook.

II.

The voice within him sighs aloud,
When murmurs of a moving crowd
Fall on his ear; he breathes the dust,
But, with a blind man's sturdy trust,
He grasps his staff, and oft he cries,
"Who cometh here?" A voice replies,
"O blind man turn thy step aside,
'Tis Christ!"

III.

The name rings in his ears
With flashing hopes and ashen fears,
There stands he breathless, startling all.
Some stop, some into ranks divide,
Their arms outspreading lest he fall.

He drops his staff, throws out his hands,
  His fingers are creeping like things that see:
Mid all the multitude he stands
  And shouts, "Have mercy, Lord, on me!"
His shaking beard, his tottering frame,
  His eye-balls in their sockets turning,
His lips delirious with that name,—
  O'er his blind face a look is burning
Of dreadful greed, with mouth agape,
Crazed for some good that may escape.
"Take my hand, some one; let me feel
His raiment only; it may heal."

IV.

Christ heard the man's blind cry, and grieved
Because a soul in darkness heaved.
  He said, "What seekest thou of me?"

But in that presence came a fear:
The man held earthly blessings dear,
Yet more than all was heavenly light.
"Lord, that I may receive my sight,—
That I may my Redeemer see!"
Christ loved him and his anguish soothed.
He took his hand, he gently smoothed
The seams upon his wrinkled brow:
"Tell me what thou beholdest now."
"Men, dim as shaking trees, I see:
O Lord, I crave to look on thee!"

V.

Then said the Saviour, "Look afar."
The blind man raised his dazéd eyes.
"I see, Lord, above thee a new-risen star,—
And beneath it a babe in a manger lies.

Hoary men, kneeling, their gifts prefer;
Frankincense, gold, and sacred myrrh.
Now a mother, a father, a babe softly sleeping
By waters that dream where the lotus bloom reigns;
Shadows of evening over them creeping;
The broad moon breaking o'er palm-bearing plains,
Where the ibis croaks and the jackal cries,
And pyramids point to the purpling skies."

VI.

He pauses, still he looks afar.
He still beholds the guiding star,
And dreamlight of a sacred river
O'er his lone eyes seems still to quiver.
Sudden, as if the distant air
Stripped the blue curtain from the skies,
He sees prophetic nature bare,—
When, as with far-off voice, he cries—

"Lo! a face to heaven in agony gleaming,
  Stained of sorrow, but soil-less of sin,
Sweat that is blood breaking and streaming
  From brows that are throbbing of anguish within,—
Praying for those that do strip Him and scourge Him
  As a cross on his quivering shoulders they place.
'Neath its burden He sinks while they mock Him, they
    urge Him,
  They crown him with thorns, they spit in His face.
They are lifting Him, bruising Him, piercing Him, nail-
    ing Him
  To the cross, that is dyed in a crimson flood.
See, the sun hides his head, see the vapour envailing
    Him,
Hark, the earth and the skies in the darkness bewailing
    Him
  Who dieth for those that are shedding His blood."

VII.

He starts, a hand is on his brow.
He looks at Christ in meek surprise
Tears gather in his new-lit eyes;
"'Tis He, the crucified!" he cries:
"Yes, I behold the Saviour now!"
The adoring people kneel around;
The healed one sinks on the hallowed ground,
Then goes his way in silence and in awe;
For his unsullied eyes had seen
The sight that from the first had been,
The sight that nature like a prophet saw.

THE EXILE.

I.

THEY bore her to the northern snows
  Whose floods down ice-domed caverns run,
From lands where that calm river flows
  Whose depths decoy the vagrant sun,
Where palms o'er latticed shadows rise
With boughs that web the sultry skies.

II.

Where roses climb the scent-steeped hills
  And channelled leaves with dew-drops flash,
Bending beneath the trickled rills
  That fall and the pink clusters splash;
Where aloe-flowers, all flaming red,
Like watch-fires o'er the summits spread.

III.

They bore her to a desert plain
  Where the dry, creviced mosses cling,
Sand-sprinkled as by drizzling rain;
  Where dark and ragged pine-boughs swing,
And the free cygnet in its flight
Darts with a meteor's wingèd light.

IV.

Her father, last of mighty lords
  Whose deeds the war-like peasants tell,
Fearless had met the northern hordes
  And in the battle's frenzy fell.
Full-armed he sleeps, and still the brave
Salute him as they pass his grave.

V.

Now young, she thinks not of her race
  But feels its glory and its pride.
She still recalls her mother's face
  Who in her stately sorrow died,
And those large eyes her image keep,
And dream beside it in love's sleep.

VI.

Eyes that are of the sultry zone—
That oft-times in their musing moods,
See rosy banks that seem their own
Where lies the waste: her olive-woods,
Her sky with cyprus-skirted folds,
All that she loves, her heart remoulds.

VII.

As in a desert one red rose
Seems like a garden full of bloom,
She charms the wilderness and throws
Her own bright colours o'er its gloom;
Then at the falling cone's rebound
Pomegranates gild the enchanted ground.

VIII.

And lest when dear illusions come
  They melt o'er-fast, she hides her eyes,
And feigns to see her native home
  And shouts in play her soul's surprise.
So while the southern glory burns,
The haunting vision still returns.

IX.

When spring bursts o'er the wintry plain
  And violet skies dissolve in spray
And marsh-pools echo drops of rain
  That o'er the bud's new secret play,
Her soul seems darting from her eyes
To snatch at nature's rhapsodies.

X.

The serf who toils upon the road
  From waste to waste with back that bears
Across the steppes another's load,—
  With eyes that homeward gaze in tears,—
Chills not for long a heart that glows
In its own fire 'mid northern snows.

XI.

Where plough may delve or harrow graze,
  She tramps beside the sluggish team
As fain to urge its tardy pace :
  And when she drifts into some dream
Her laugh, her look of childish glee,
Is still the joy of memory.

XII.

But fears flash o'er her mellow eyes
  When gaunt sand-fountains, side by side,
Like giants in the distance rise
  Pass slowly by and onward glide,
Like shadows from her father's land
That seek some rumoured, icy strand.

XIII.

Then day breaks through a sullen sky;
  The keen air shivers;—doth she know
The blackened clouds now sailing by
  Are freighted with the virgin snow?
Dark ships of winter that unload
The wide-spread famine they forbode.

XIV.

The snow-flakes build a prison-wall
  That slants high o'er her window sill;
She watches while they slowly fall,
  Till heaven appears a sinking hill,
And darkness gathers o'er her mind:
Home is too far for hope to find.

XV.

In new despair she sees heaven's sand
  Has drifted o'er her cottage gate!
She fears that now her native land
  Is like the desert desolate.
The snow still falls and still it clings,
Soft dropped like insects' broken wings.

XVI.

Through the strange dusk she hears the shriek
  Of trees snapped by the dreaded wind;
The casements shake, the rafters creak;
  Ah! could she now her mother find!
With timid wings too weak for flight
She hangs upon the edge of night.

XVII.

A wind's moan utters, stir and go:
  Upon its gust she seems to glide
Towards lands beyond the falling snow
  But reaches not its further side.
She drops on the cold hilly steeps
And in her distant reverie sleeps.

XVIII.

No longer now the large-eyed child,
  Who draws her charm so fresh from heaven,
Gives back its beauty to the wild;
  The spell of infant faith is riven:
Where the sun's tender rays were sown
Stones have sprung up and ice-fields grown.

XIX.

The spring still comes, when shallow snows
  Melt o'er a crisping flame of green
Wherein the nestled herbage glows
  Through its white shell,—but there is seen
A heart that still unthawed remains;
An exile of the loveless plains.

XX.

Now winter's sun through summer shines;
The joys are banished that she brought:
For home, not dreams of home, she pines;
Thought is the food of famished thought.
It is her heart-corroding hour:
The rose-tree is without a flower.

XXI.

She feeds in broken reveries
On her chilled soul: within the light
Of those black lashes, those dark eyes,
The paling cheek seems over-bright,
With lips, like hanging fruit, whose hue
Is ruby 'neath a bloom of blue.

XXII.

The friends who love her as their own
Stir self-upbraidings in her breast,
For in their midst she is alone
And in their peace is without rest.
Is there some home by them forgot?
Exiles they seem and suffer not.

XXIII.

Their native games to her impart
A fitful joy, that sad appears,
Only because her eyes and heart
Are vacant, and have room for tears.
She knows not yet 'tis love's first throe:
The snowdrop breaking through the snow.

XXIV.

At length comes one whose love ere told
  Seems wafted o'er a flowery plain,
And brings her back that charm of old :
  The days of childhood live again ;
Griefs softened into joys return ;
In love's new-kindled incense burn.

XXV.

In silver-crimson trappings gay,
  His tinkling barbs with billowy manes
Toss their strong necks before his sleigh,–
  And he has crossed the snowy plains.
She hails him, and, with heart a-flame,
She wonders how such passion came.

XXVI.

Beauty and man's strong soul are his.
  Be the earth bare, paved o'er with ice,
'Tis full even to its dome in bliss:
  The desert is her paradise,
Where now the hourly deepening sky
Rains down on her love's mystery.

XXVII.

She hears his love and hears no more.
  As waves might cease to beat, as winds
Might drop away on some charmed shore,
  The word a soul-deep echo finds—
All her fond life is without breath,
And sinks away in rapturous death.

XXVIII.

New paths to home are overlaid
With such deep sunshine, not a tree
In densest woods can cast a shade.
Her glorious soul again is free,—
Free in those bonds of love that wind
In bliss about the heart they bind.

XXIX.

Warmer than in its childhood's flush
Her cheek in this new passion glows;
Not softer is the fitful blush
Of lily 'neath the swaying rose.
Her head droops not as when she pined,
Now bowed in love's own southern wind.

XXX.

A sun of passion is above;
  Her home is here,—in cloudless eyes
She sees the birth-place of her love,
  And snows dissolve in burning skies.
Palm-leaves above her seem to bow
When bridal roses wreathe her brow.

REMINISCENCE.

I.

So you would leave me, little Rose?
  Dear child, with all your mother's ways
  That look she had in girlish days,
The look that with your beauty grows.

II.

Oft when you bring her to my mind,
  Before my heart has time for pain,
  In you she seems to live again,
As though no sorrow were behind.

III.

And when that happy, trustful gaze
  Meets him you love, yet more I see
  Your mother as she looked at me:
It is her own dear, watchful face.

IV.

And when he takes your hand in his,
  There flits across your lips and eyes
  Her own pleased smile of half surprise:
It seems not like departed bliss.

V.

Ah! what a heart-locked memory stirs—
  I look, 'tis she, and you are gone!
  Yes, though so many springs have flown,
Her peace remains, our love is hers.

VI.

She sees your arms my neck enclose;
She sees your lips upon my brow.
No truer hour of love than now
Awaits your heart, my happy Rose!

VII.

How they come back those days of old!
And now that 'tis your wedding-eve,
Now that for other scenes you leave,
One happy legend shall be told,—

VIII.

Told in this home, this sunny vale
That for long years has been our own,
Sacred in days that long have gone
To many another lover's tale.

IX.

It was an hour like this, the sun
  Was sinking, yet had far to go :
  The richness of his overflow
Down river, wood, and pasture shone.

X.

Two lovers in this porch had met
  Where often they had met in play :
  'Twas on this memorable day—
As though that sun had never set.

XI.

These grey-mossed tiles still 'neath it scorch ;
  The glare and shade still side by side
  Aslant the mullioned casements glide
From yon old gable to the porch.

XII.

A youth has hurried from these walls—
  He stops, as in a day-dream stands:
  His shadow with fast-folded hands
As from yon stone sun-dial falls.

XIII.

His eyes are full of one loved face
  Sunk pallid in her fingers cleft;
  The long-loved one who just had left
In timid haste his wild embrace.

XIV.

The love that with her childhood grew
  Had still to her unruffled clung,
  Engaging, playful, ever young,—
And without change was ever new.

XV.

Not its glad pastimes she disowns ;
  He drew her to a higher love ;
  But while the pale emotion strove
She fled from his impassioned tones.

XVI.

Transparent isles of rushes bind
  The rivers light with bars of green
  That catch the water's blue between,
To where it darkens in the wind.

XVII.

There lies his boat, and now the sun,
  Still going westward with the stream,
  Appears to tow him on his dream
As they advance in unison.

XVIII.

Along the white and yellow meads,
  Which buttercup and daisy share,
  The crowding cattle idly stare
As he winds through the matted reeds.

XIX.

But her loved image fills his mind,
  And, ever gazing at him, screens
  His eyes from those long-happy scenes,
As he drifts by them, nature-blind.

XX.

The white-flowered weed whose tresses float,
  Combed by the stream and water-waved,
  Seems her bright hair in crystal laved,
Struggling to overtake his boat.

XXI.

His sculls drip o'er the glossy wash :
  The ripple of the mellow tide
  He scarce feels o'er their edges glide ;
He lists not for the thrilling plash,

XXII.

But thinks, when last the tide he clove,
  How bank-side elms before him flew,
  And quiet lay the distant view
Of woodland hill where dwelt his love.

XXIII.

His memory holds it as the stream
  Holds all the shining summer round :
  The sky, the woods, the very sound
Of cuckoos chanting in a dream.

XXIV.

And how she loved the grey old bridge!
  Those arches mirrored deep below,
  That meet the pillars row to row,
Quivering from their ruffled ridge—

XXV.

Three tunnels open to the skies!
  The tasselled mosses as they float,
  Now still, now heaving with the boat
That passes while the vision flies.

XXVI.

As melt, with all the watery heaven,
  Those arches hanging o'er a sky—
  So in the quiet of a sigh
The yearnings of his soul seemed riven.

XXVII.

The far off boom of yonder weir
  Now rushes down the narrowed day:
  Like syrens battling with the spray,
Once came its music to her ear.

XXVIII.

The sun now trembles like a ball
  Heaven-forged and glittering in its blast;
  A pale green halo round him cast—
Half quenched behind the waterfall.

XXIX.

White streaks are creeping through the shade;
  The moon climbs up the poplar trees:
  But a loved form of light he sees,
As if her spirit walked the glade.

XXX.

Well might it be, as since hath seemed,—
So holy are the vanished years.
But then her cheeks were under tears :
It was on them the moonlight gleamed.

XXXI.

Her sobbings at his bosom fall ;
Fonder than words can tell, they say
Her heart was his, half love, half play,
But now all love she gives it all.

XXXII.

'Twas she, your mother ! While she hung
Her head, and hid her tears, and crept
To me, as one who, erring, wept ;
Wept more the closer that she clung ;

XXXIII.

She seemed an infant in my arms—
  Kissed me as would a child bereaved:
  And then, as 'twere for joy, she grieved—
Her heart released from its alarms.

XXXIV.

God bless you, Rose! That loving face—
  Could she but see it! Well I knew
  Her thoughts when last she looked at you,
Who now have grown up in her place.

XXXV.

Ah, leave me, Rose! these memories stir
  Depths that you may not dream of, child!
  These tears till now your love has wiled;
Leave me, that I may think of her.

ORTRUD'S VISION.

PART I.

I.

THE woods hang low by the river side,
The tired-out floods o'er boulders swoon,
Pale willows, lapping at the tide,
Draw vapours from the watery moon,
Dark loom the towers in the sallow light,
Where Ortrud's vision fills the night.

II.

The lady Ortrud, Oscar's child—
  Oscar whom all the people blessed;
Whose rule o'er lands of heathen smiled,
  Turning to joy each heart oppressed,
Though blindly in dark days he strove
Against the Christ, the Lord of Love.

III.

In secret wise she loves the name
  Of him the Christian folk adore:
Christ doth she love, but loves in shame,
  Her brother Osric loves she more.
Yea, though with God he wages strife
She loves her brother more than life.

IV.

She lay upon the brink of sleep ;
  Her soul was slipping down its bank :
There did the slumbrous circles sweep
  With startling rush, and as she sank
Into the danger of her dream
Her flesh crept like a ruffled stream.

V.

Half-stranger to herself she lay,
  When came back in a yellow flood
The ghostly light of yesterday
  As it had set : beside her stood
An angel, with a cross that blazed
From blue to ruby as she gazed.

VI.

The cross she loved, whose sign had spread
  The Saviour's name through all the west.
There sits she troubled in her bed
  With white hands 'gainst her forehead prest;
With eyes that watch, and never stir,
Though the dark night doth compass her.

VII.

She creeps out to her gallery floor;
  A lamp, dull as a warder's eyes,
Is hanging at her father's door:
  Thither amazed and rapt she hies,
Lets fall on him her timid hands
And at his pallet waiting stands.

VIII.

"Father!" she says, "art thou asleep?
  There is an angel in my room
Bearing a cross whose colours leap
  And tangle in each other's bloom.
It is a dream, as now I see,
But my heart burned to tell it thee."

IX.

Those were her words, trembling she told
  Her vivid vision as it came;
But ere the end her faith grew cold,
  And she drew back in sudden shame.
"Yet not my weak and waning faith,
But mine own voice wakes doubt," she saith.

X.

He kissed her forehead chill and damp,
  And said, "Think of thy dream no more."
She slid away beneath the lamp
  That paled athwart his open door,
Troubled at heart, by fears possessed
That in her chamber find no rest.

XI.

She strays out on her balcony
  And holds her face up in the dark.
Yes; there is music in the sky,—
  She listens to the thrilling lark,
And mounts the tower-stairs' circling sweep
To break in on her brother's sleep.

XII.

And now what strikes on Ortrud's eyes?
  O'er Osric's breast a radiance streams
That steeps his tunic in its dyes:
  A cross throws out its spearing beams,
Now with the opal's fitful wane,
Now with the rainbow's deepening stain.

XIII.

While fainting at the door she clings,
  Osric awakens in amaze:
Like one that seeth dreadful things
  But through another's fixéd gaze.
He cannot see the wondrous sight
That fills the room with holy light.

XIV.

He could not see the angel there,
  But rose and swept away in scorn
The films of dream that webbed the air :
  Roused by call of martial horn,
He looks out on the welkin grey
That splits with many a splintering ray.

XV.

O'ER knights and squires and streamers shone
  The glory of the eastern skies :
Osric is to the battle gone.
  High o'er the towers his banner flies
And Ortrud at the drawbridge stands
Waving farewell with trembling hands.

XVI.

And when they all have crossed the fosse
  She turns into her bower and prays :
" Lord, send Thy angel of the cross
  To my dear brother far away.
My brother who is all to me,
Open his eyes that he may see !"

PART II.

I.

"O thou dear Christ who didst impart
  Thy holiest sign! Vouchsafe to show
Thy love hath touched my brother's heart!"
  So she besought in strains of woe
From the sun's setting till its rise,
Mid hymns and saintly reveries.

II.

She sleeps; her lax and listless limbs
  Hang from her seat; her arms drop low;
With busy leaves the ivy climbs
  Her lattice, trilling to and fro,
In outer dreams that breezes weave
Beneath her casement's shady eave.

III.

In her soul's transit through a dream
  A dove lights on her window-sill,
And enters with the early gleam:
  She feels its ruffled pinions thrill
And flutter at her heart, which keeps
Fond watch on heaven while she sleeps.

IV.

In sudden dread, her soul awakes.
  Is it an angel standing near?
Her brother's glorious image breaks
  Upon her, she beholds in fear
His face paled o'er with deathly gloss,
And his blood sprinkled on the cross.

V.

"Fear me not, sister, but rejoice;
  Thy prayers have reached the world of day
Where dwell the blest; I heard thy voice,—
  The dead are never far away,—
And they who for their kindred yearn,
Do oft in love to them return.

VI.

"Upon the battle's fevered eve
I lay within my tent and slept:
Strange visions did my spirit grieve,
And wings and voices round me swept:
'Osric, this fight is not for thee:
The good, the faithful follow me!'

VII.

"And then a beaming angel came
With azure eyes and forehead blest,
He waved a sword of quivering flame
Wherewith he smote me on the breast.
Again the cross in radiance broke
And slowly faded as I woke.

VIII.

"I started up, I called my squires:
We rode away with echoing tramp
Where through the night shone ruddy fires
From out the holy Christian camp.
We passed within the sacred bourn,
Our mail aflame with lights of morn.

IX.

"Scarce the sky broke when heathen foes
Came down the distant hills and seemed
To pour from night; they still arose;
On all the plain their armour gleamed.
Then swept o'er all a rushing blight
And they were hidden from our sight.

X.

"Through the wide-rolling mists we rode,
War-horse and warrior in his pride;
And on the frighted hosts we trode,—
The red-cross banner at our side.
Our spears like meteors flaming flew
And all the foes of Christ o'erthrew."

XI.

She saw the glory round his head
And in his eyes immortal bliss,
And o'er his lips, all beaming spread,
The light of Christ's remembered kiss.
He vanished, but the troubled air
Still kept the red-cross shining there.

THE FIRST SAVED.

I.

LUCILLA lives in yon half-hidden star
  Bowered in a dreamy, soft-skied, watery vale,
Where angels gather from bright worlds afar,
  To see her face, and listen to her tale.

II.

As if all sunset revelled in the air,
  The rosy clouds float o'er her paradise,—
Home of the once lone daughter of despair
  Who prayed through tears with ever downcast eyes.

III.

The lucent hills pant in the azure beams,
  Behind empurpled steeps that blend below
With trembling woods and crystal-bearing streams,
  And in the sky-paved water-mirrors glow.

IV.

As rising stars entangle in their spheres
  All the blue ether round, her look of thought
Hangs in heaven's light, where her sad life appears
  A sunless vision in new sunshine wrought.

V.

There doth she stand, bliss-stricken as by fear.
  On one soft hand she rests her chin and cheek ;
Paling with rapture ere the blush appear,
  And lips in tremors whisper that would speak.

VI.

" Yes, I am here, and Heaven is undefiled !
  This sinless face and these all-loving eyes
God gave me when I was a little child,
  Because I was to be in Paradise.

VII.

" I heard a voice and slavery's loosened bond
  Fell from my soul, awaking me to die ;
I looked into death's mirror and beyond
  I saw these halls of immortality.

VIII.

" My wounded heart lay in this bosom dead
  Ere it had loved—yet oft as I did pray
That these wan hands might labour for their bread,
  Hope only came to prayer but did not stay.

IX.

" Sin compassed me, it was my deadly fate;
Yet lovely visions in the darkness came,
And I fled trembling to the Temple's gate
But durst not cross the threshold for my shame.

X.

" While on the Temple's steps I sat in tears,
One came and spoke: I gazed and I adored!
Then did a voice that only woman hears
Whisper within: I listened, self-abhorred.

XI.

" 'Twas He whose image visited my sleep.
But still He spake to me in words that gave
A world, and had soul-echoes clear and deep
Which widened ever like the circling wave.

XII.

"His image grew before my wondering mind—
His, mid whose many griefs my life began.
Enrapt I gazed, until my eyes were blind,
On Him who in his pity dies for man.

XIII.

"When the blest vision ceased my eyes would droop
And in great dreams that holy being meet;
Then would he clothe me, lowly would he stoop,
And with his hands anoint my weary feet.

XIV.

"Thenceforth He was the rock that safely drew
My heart to shelter, as the gentle shore
Receives the broken wave: to Him it flew
And the lulled sorrow beat on me no more.

XV.

"Then o'er me flow'd that stream of heavenly grace
Which all my infant innocence restored :
From that glad hour has rested on my face
This happy gaze of one who has adored.

XVI.

"The living Saviour had my heart enthralled !
I saw His face, in His blessed footsteps moved;
And in my dreams His holy word recalled;
I knew not who He was: I only loved.

XVII.

"Then did I but remember things to come,
The reveries of pure delights above;
Yes, to this blissful height my passion clomb,
And sin was silenced in the hush of love.

XVIII.

" In that o'ershadowing trance till death I lay :
  Peace weighed upon me like the Saviour's kiss.
Towards the beloved my eyes would fondly stray
  In sleeping rapture and awaking bliss.

XIX.

" Death with dis-shadowed hand had come betimes,
  And bore my grave into the open skies.
And then I hearkened to the heavenly chimes
  That cheered my soul's ascent to Paradise.

XX.

" My end seemed consummated in the clouds :
  There with the purple morn my slumber broke ;
But tempting spirits hovered round in crowds
  And gathered like a storm as I awoke.

XXI.

" Upon the Temple's highest pinnacle
  The Saviour stood in glory like the sun.
The rapture of my soul was at the full:
  Eternal life had unawares begun.

XXII.

" He from that holy height upon me gazed;
  The angels in His glorious presence trod:
With outstretched wings I rushed to them amazed,
  And flew into the open arms of God."

MICHAEL ANGELO.

I see him, Nature's art-robed minister
Who set her dream to marble's indrawn breath
In the pale forms that sleep, that wake, like her,
On those twin Tuscan monuments of Death.

I.

His spirit haunts the olive-laden banks,
The cypressed village belfry in decay,
The marble hills whose silvery whiteness flanks
The vale he loved ; all seems the former day
When he began in art's warm hand to thaw
The frosted rock, and petrify the beam
That round his chisel swerved until he saw
The spirit's beauty o'er the features gleam.

II.

And yon old sunset, that with rosy dyes
  Fades in the marble hollows, tells anew
Of Twilight's nodding brows and closing eyes,
  As when the statue from their depths he drew,
Which now in drowsy marble seems to wait,
  Ere it go down, the waking of the dead ;
That simmers in half-sleep as there it sate
  When lifted, dozing, from its ancient bed.

III.

There he first listened to the ringing note
  That seemed in harmony with art to breathe
Out of the marble which the mallet smote,
  As though a syren quickened underneath.

There he first dreamed how all forms fair below
  In yonder virgin cemetery lay,
Their beauty crusted over like the snow
  Eternal with the snow of yesterday.

IV.

He wanders here and there a studious guest
  In halls of state where old-world marbles fill
The solemn garden, and through ages rest
  In high demeanour and impassive will;
Where only heaven-born spirits dare adore!
  Where lordly chambers, held from range to range
By souls that breathe in sculpture evermore,
  His perilous ideas to marble change.

V.

He sees the Venus Victrix bold outstand,
  As crystal pure, shameless as the white rose,
Paling the apple's blush in her bright hand,
  To speak the triumph of that grand repose.
And flushed Bacchante breathes the nectarous gale,
  And, with uncertain fingers, lightly holds
Her ruffled robe behind her, like a sail,
  That flutters wide in loose inebriate folds.

VI.

He sees Hermaphroditè, double-souled.
  On no fond arm reclines the lonely head;
The fruitless bosom in the dust has rolled,
  Sleep and despair o'er feeble features spread.

Dreaming the silence of enchanted song,
  There Ariadne sleeps 'twixt bended arms,
While Love's impassioned longings round her throng,
  And melt into the likeness of her charms.

VII.

He sees the Wrestlers, the last gasping throe,
  The pent-up strength, the all-resisting strain;
Yet ere the victor strike that vengeful blow
  The rigid arm he grasps must snap in twain.
He sees Laocoon climb the serpent-wave
  That plunges o'er him with a tempest's might,
Hurrying his sons to the engulphing grave
  That whirls them, helpless, from his suffering sight.

VIII.

He sees the Gladiator sink at last
On that enduring arm—death now the foe ;—
The contest all within, the struggle cast
On his strong soul that waits no further blow,
While he looks down upon the welling flood
Which saps the life that he would cherish still—
Replenishing the void of dripping blood
With the stern breath of his unvanquished will.

IX.

He sees proud Niobe ; the lofty gaze,
And the dread-quickened heart her soul divide,
As those bewildered eyes pierce through the haze
Where death pursues the children of her pride.

He loves that loveliest who, death-stricken, stoops!
  As the bent lily-stem and blossom stand—
So her sweet body forward falls and droops—
  The terror fainting from her face and hand.

X.

He sees the Fates, o'er-ruling ancient art:
  Nigh, yet afar, like the calm spreading sea
Whose storm is brewed in heaven, they sit apart,
  Enwrapped in a death-wrinkled drapery;
And Silence, who, with lifted finger, stays
  The bridled hours that backward seem to slip
Into the stillness of departed days,
  Which hangs upon the magic of his lip.

XI.

He sees Apollo,—burning at his side
The unerring shafts—flames in the ether slung,
That leap against the bow and earthward glide—
That haughty brow, that arm high-backward flung.
He gazes at the all-impatient ray,
Closing his eyes at the thrill imminent:
A god alone dare speed it on its way—
With steadfast glance on the far goal intent.

XII.

Thus journeying through the ancient world of art
His soul is vexed with hope that seems despair,
Eager for heaven, yet oft-times faint of heart
With feet that tremble on the golden stair.

Through many lands he goes, at last returns
  To those dear haunts of his triumphant youth,
With untamed ardours and with soul that burns
  To shape his visions of eternal truth.

XIII.

Has human beauty then its term outrun?
  These spirits all arrayed in marble light,—
They stand between him and the glorious sun,
  They haunt him like the spectres of the night,
Wasting his heart—he almost longs to die;
  His stream of life is slipping fast away—
And there they stand transfixed immovably,
  Darkening with light of old his new-born day.

XIV.

Dare yet another ope the ethereal doors
  And slant his ladder 'twixt the heaven and earth,
Those ever-teeming corridors explore
  Whence sculpture came and genius had its birth?
Nature is still in heaven, in that high place
  He hears a voice that bids him not depart,
But linger there till he beholds her face,
  And bears away her likeness on his heart.

XV.

He snatches at her mysteries while she broods;
  In all his toils 'tis she alone he seeks.
One eve he stands to watch her changeful moods:
  It seems to him she lifts the veil and speaks.

With fevered cheek unconscious of its flush,
He listens there with visions in his eyes:
The moon shines forth and blends with twilight's hush;
The sun looks back from out the purple skies.

XVI.

He gazes till upon those marble heights
Twilight seems sitting on a rocky scroll
Beside the weary day, the solemn lights
Immerged within the purpling of her soul.
Beneath her shoulder nod the depths below—
And soon shall sleep those struggling lids surprise!
Her brows bend lower, dropping as they throw
An evening shadow down the precipice.

XVII.

Then Twilight dies; there comes the tired-out Night.
  Yonder she lies in young, full-bosomed sleep,
Weaning the hours: her hand shuts out the light,
  Her half-coiled limbs o'ershadow all the deep.
Her dreamless face without a memory,
  Propped by an arm that like a snowy wreath,
Is slipping down the smooth and curvéd thigh
  Till sleep seems fluttering on a single breath.

XVIII.

He gazes till the form that by her slept
  Moves stealthily and drags the unkempt ray,
Before the sun hath o'er the mountain leapt
  And brought the tidings of the new-born day.

At last while float the veils of purple haze,
  O'er mountain-peak, o'er vineyard, stream and lawn,
There breaks upon the sculptor-poet's gaze
  The beauteous face of the recumbent Dawn.

XIX.

She sits where Night has sat, held back by sleep;
  But troubled into waking by day-dreams,
Her scarce half-open eyes for memory peep,
  While to her breast escape their sprinkled beams
That lengthen out new depths of loveliness,
  And warn her to arise before the sun,
That, couched beneath unseen, with warm caress,
  May soon her softer beauty over-run!

XX.

Then rises up the golden face of Day!
  His head hath risen, his astonished eyes
Look o'er that lifted shoulder, weird and gray,
  And in their light his massive body lies,
As 'twere yon fertile valley, with those limbs
  Aslant, that tower and slope in glittering peaks!
A lustrous brow high up the summit climbs
  And in a cloudless blaze of morning breaks.

XXI.

Fair as the valleys, as the mountains grand,
  These visions in the marble he hath wrought;
Now with a bright now with a shadowy hand,
  Unconscious nature he hath moved to thought.

Here is man's face the symbol of the sun
  That journeys on, that rests upon his way;
His course for ever ending and begun
  From twilight unto dawn, from night to day.

XXII.

He builds up temples, sculptures for the sky
  Their pinnacles and statues, as he wills:
Lovelier to him than all arise on high,
  Steep behind steep, his native marble hills,
Lost in the pale blue shades behind them hung,
  As if beyond the reach of mortal hand;
For he more wonders from their rocks has wrung
  Than on the proud seven hills in ruin stand.

THE PAINTER.

I.

"SUMMER has done her work," the painter cries,
 And saunters down his garden by the shore.
"The fig is cracked and dry; upon it lies,
 In crystals, the sweet oozing of its core.
The peach melts in its pink and yellow beam;
 Grapes cluster to the earth in diadems
 Of dripping purple; from their slender stems,
'Mid paler leaves, the dark-green citrons gleam.

II.

"Summer has done her work; she, lingering, sees
Her shady places glare: yet cooler grow
The breezes as they stir the sunny trees
Whose shaking twigs their ruby berries sow,
Ripe is the fairy-grass, we breathe its seeds.
But, hanging o'er the rocks that belt the shore,
Safe from the sea, above its bustling roar,
Here ripen, still, the blossom-swinging weeds.

III.

"Pale cressets on the summer waters shine,
No ripple there but flings its jet of fire.
Rich amber wrack still bronzing in the brine
Is tossed ashore in daylight to expire.

A wallowing wave the rocky shoal enwreathes;
  From the loose spray, cascades of bubbles fall
  Down steeps whose watery, coral-mantled wall
Drinks of the billow, and the sunshine breathes.

IV.

"Summer has done her work, but mine remains.
  How shall I shape these ever-murmuring waves,
How interweave these rumours and refrains,
  These wind-tossed echoes of the listening caves?
The restless rocky roar, the billow's splash,
  And the all-hushing shingle—hark! it blends,
  In open melody that never ends,
The drone, the cavern-whisper, and the clash.

V.

"And this wide ruin of a once new shore
  Scooped by new waves to waves of solid rock,
Dark-shelving, white-veined, as if marbled o'er
  By the fresh surf still trickling block to block!
O worn-out waves of night, long set aside—
  The moulded storm in dead, contending rage,—
  Like monster-breakers of a by-gone age!
And now the gentle waters o'er you ride.

VI.

"Can my hand darken in swift rings of flight
  The air-path cut by the black sea-gulls' wings,
Then fill the dubious track with influent light,
  While to my eyes the vanished vision clings?

While at their sudden whirr the billows start,
  Can my hand hush the cymbal-sounding sea,
  That breaks with louder roar its reverie
As those fast pinions into silence dart?

VII.

"Press on, ye summer waves, still gently swell,-
  The rainbow's parent-waters over-run!
Can my poor brush your snaky greenness tell,
  Raising your sheeny bellies to the sun?
What touch can pour you in yon pool of blue
  Circled with surging froth of liquid snow,
  Which now dissolves to emerald, now below
Glazes the sunken rocks with umber hue?

VIII.

"Summer has done her work, dare I begin—
Painting a desert, though my pencil craves
To intertwine all tints with heaven akin?
Nature has flung her palette to the waves!
Then bid my eyes on cloudy landscape dwell,—
Not revel in thy blaze. O beauteous scene!
Between thy art and mine is nature's screen,—
Transparent only to the soul,—farewell!

IX.

"Oh! could I paint thee with these ravished eyes,-
Catch in my hollow palm thy overflow,
Who broadcast fling'st away thy witcheries!
Yet would I not desponding turn and go.

Be it a feeble hand to thee I raise,
  'Tis still the worship of the soul within :
  Summer has done her work,—let mine begin,
Though as the grass it wither in thy blaze."

THE BIRTH OF VENUS.

I.

THE waters of the warm, surf-laden sea,
  Couched 'neath a heaven of love that o'er them bends,
Lie trance-bound in a dream of ecstasy,
  Prophetic of a rapture that impends.

II.

Now they swell up as if love's underflow
  Lifted their bosom, the sun's shredded fires
Glinting each tremor; now, with pulses low,
  They lapse into a deluge of desires.

III.

The sun glares on his way across the deep,
  And, bounding to the zenith's utmost height,
There vacillates and from his fiery steep
  Burns in his pride on ocean to alight.

IV.

The procreative ether downward floats
  On slanting beams that pierce the dazzled sky,
And nature kindles as the vivid motes
  With crackling germs her rage beatify.

V.

The wombs of nature, in their several spheres,
  With rival love new beauty generate:
The fruitful earth a swollen harvest bears,
  But yearns for more beneath her bursting weight.

VI.

With teemful breasts, in innocence unchaste,
  She still the yielding elements distrains,
And runs her over-mellowness to waste,
  While on her lap one cluster yet remains.

VII.

The sun has sunk, in his voluptuous heat
  Creaming with rosy love the ocean floor,
Till only serried waves his blush repeat
  As they uprise and froth the pulpy shore.

VIII.

The stars revolve in pairs, the fiery red
  Infect the deathly pale with new desires,
And downward whirled upon the ocean-bed
  Assail its floods with phosphor-dripping fires.

IX.

Nature's imperious passions intertwine,
  And one great spirit moves upon the sea :
With silver light the emerald waters shine
  Along the procreant path of Deity.

X.

Where the charmed moon a milder day has shed,
  Venus, the love-star, burns : her virgin gifts
From heaven to those blest waters she hath sped ;
  Wave over wave her paler image drifts.

XI.

Then night in purple dusk descends and holds
  The earth and skies apart, all dim between :
A firmament deep-hidden in its folds
  Shines densely at love's festival, unseen.

XII.

There heaven the holy hymen celebrates—
  When all the crowded galaxy appears:
A flash has opened the horizon's gates
  And through them sweeps the concert of the spheres

XIII.

The lighted waters answer to the skies;
  The distant music seems to re-ascend,
And spreads in echoes whose soft melodies,
  Skimming the flood, in silent zephyrs end.

XIV.

All passion dies, or, burning still remote,
  Narrows its sphere, and, mirrored from above,
Descends asleep in fairy dreams that float
  Into the pensive image of its love.

XV.

And now, lest nature slumber o'er desire,
 The molten passions part, the winds are free,
The sweltered air inflames, the flashing fire
 Darts at the jealous, fierce uprising sea.

XVI.

The curdled foam whitens the watery night,
 Froths up the weeds that, hurried on amain,
Like congregated porpoises in flight,
 Are heaped in shoals upon the furrowed plain.

XVII.

There falls a daylight of celestial lull;
 But fields are ravaged, the ripe, glistening wheat
That travelled in the breezes, ears shock-full,
 Lies on the ground as by a handflail beat.

XVIII.

Woods have flung up their secret roots, embowered
On their bruised boughs, and yet with whirling rush
Rapacious floods from virgin hills deflowered
Strew the snatched blossoms and the meadows flush.

XIX.

A moist, heart-ripening calm has come to rot
Delved shores, despoiled by the unnatural wave
And swarming with sea monsters ill-begot
That crawl to perish, lacking all they crave.

XX.

Sea-weeds are piled in stacks upon the beach,
And crisp as fuel for the hungry sun.
The rocks whose climbing paths the welkin reach,
Lashed by the waves, with foam are overrun.

XXI.

Mermaids lie dead along the wreck-strewn sands,
Pitched by high waves upon the ocean-side,
With snapt-off boughs of coral in their hands,—
Their scaly folds frothed in the panting tide.

XXII.

Over the quiet sea rides on his back
The sun-stained dolphin, there, in lifeless ease,
Tossed up and down 'mid isles of bladder-wrack
Wrenched with their shell-fish from the weeded seas.

XXIII.

But in one bay, held by the nymphs that bathe
In its translucent pools and trust to view
Their dripping hair and bosom, while they swathe
Their waists in coral spangled by the dew,

XXIV.

Or twist green garlands round them for a shrine,
  Culling the briny flowers with pearl inwove,
That unctuous cling as tendrils of a vine
  And weave a bower for newly-budded love ;—

XXV.

In such a bay, where bluest waters buoy
  Leaves coral-mown and froth of bubbling white,
Where the dipped rays o'er shallow rocks deploy
  And film soft honeycombs of shaking light ;—

XXVI.

Lo ! There bright golden ringlets interlace :
  A rosy hand athwart a bosom gleams,
Then sweeps the surf, and thence looks forth a face
  As if at length inheriting its dreams.

XXVII.

She rises from the pool in half eclipse,
  Knotting the weeds that circle her about,
While the morn's kisses meet her coral lips
  Now stirred, now closed in beauty's luscious pout.

XXVIII.

Under her rose-dipped feet the mirror shows
  A form divine enamelled in the sky:
Smile after smile along the water flows
  And ripples as she gazes stealthily.

XXIX.

Love, the bright image of her virgin soul,
  Kindles the dreamy depths, is thence upborne
To the impassioned heaven, and o'er the whole
  Of the rapt world reddens the blush of morn.

THE DOUBLE SOUL.

In the far east whence olden legend flows,
A cryptic cipher fashions upon stone,
Under a weeping tree that flowerless grows,
How man's and woman's souls were erst in one.

How in those hapless bonds they ever cried
Unto the winds and sea to sever them,—
When, cast upon the waves, the body died
And the souls bloomed each on a separate stem.

I.

Against a hollow, rocky promontory
The sea, breaking as if it wept, throws out
Most piteous sounds,—now faint, like woman's cry,
And shrill;—now loud, like man's despairing shout.

II.

Is it the waves, or doth some moiling breast,
  Buoyant above their moan, heave as they heave,
Fall as they fall, not resting in their rest,—
  That 'neath their load so fitfully they grieve?

III.

As when the inconsolable makes wail,
  Many, not knowing why, take up the plaint,—
Winds catch the sound and through the caverns trail
  Its melancholy moanings, shrill or faint,

IV.

And out to sea drag the wild monody.
  The all-abhorrent floods and sidelong swirls,
The jutting rocks, resound the hopeless cry
  That o'er the watery vortex echoing whirls.

V.

With head hurled back and arms behind it tossed,
A prostrate form hath from the deep emerged,
Uttering loud lamentations, like the lost
Whose end is self-begotten and self-dirged.

VI.

That mystic being, beautiful with life
In its strong prime, through some high passion dies;
The great desires, surviving mortal strife,
Are raving heavenward in those hopeless eyes.

VII.

The hair, thrown back in wet, uncurling rings,
Floats on the wave with woman's silken spell:
There seems an end of many sufferings;
The hands repose as after a farewell.

VIII.

The open eyes, unshaken in their pain,
  The features set in unrepining calm,—
Is not this woman,—never to complain
  While peace is seen beyond the dying qualm?

IX.

Once more a frantic voice calls out for death,
  That still the tardy element denies:
The swollen throat, the nostrils panting breath,—
  It may not be that there a woman lies.

X.

That brow, in anger deeply knotted, hurls
  Its hate at heaven, whose fitful utterance leaves
The hair self-twisted into writhing curls:
  It is a rival god in torment heaves.

XI.

It was the bitter cry—"Be blotted out
  From these vain-longing eyes, O universe!"
The voice is man's; then dies away the shout
  And woman's sadder echo tracks the curse.

XII.

As if the spirit's music knew its sex,
  Now man's, now woman's severing accents thrill;
The same desires these troubled natures vex:
  How long shall they one cruel fate fulfil?

XIII.

Like the wind's purple shadow on the deep,
  Death flits across the face; the parted lips,
The open eyes, dark-gazing into sleep,
  Are in the presence of a world's eclipse.

XIV.

Who now stands by, with bosom-veiling hair
  Whose sentient tresses ripple as they hide
The noble blush that says her face is fair,
  While she beholds one greater at her side?

XV.

One like in glory to a star new-lit,
  Who watches her, now from that bondage riven.
His eyes feed on her light, and never quit
  Her sympathetic gaze which deepens heaven.

THE PHILOSOPHER.

I.

In death's abstraction, with slow-rambling eyes,
He gazes on the stationary sun
And wonders, as on heaven's brink it lies,
Whether the day be ended or begun.
And less he knows the course his spirit takes,
Whether it sets or into morning breaks.

II.

He was the heritor of many minds;
More than their own his thoughts were man's delight
Yet now, in the bewildering dusk, he finds
No token whether it be day or night.
His soul is trembling towards its earthly close
Uncertain whence it comes or whither goes

III.

He turns his face to heaven, as to a friend,
And feebly asks, "Is this philosophy
That doubts the more the nearer to the end?
Is this how the philosopher should die,
Still dubious if the soul may live again
Or with the dead incurious remain?

IV.

"Like friends retiring from a pleasant feast,
  Could we but bear some token in our mind
Of those we love,—some parting word at least,—
  'Twould not be missed: yet all we leave behind,
Yes, even the sayings of the good and dear:
Let them abide though we abide not here!

V.

"As I sink back behind the iron veil,
  Heaven opens not; no spirits on me call:
An untold morrow seems my hope to fail.
  Are sleep and death twin brothers after all?
The sun shines lonely, pale, dispirited,
And on his path escorts me to the dead.

VI.

" Once, free in thought, did I the peaks ascend
And try to grasp the one momentous theme
That lured me on, delusive to the end,
And shaped my soul to its immortal dream.
Then how life's humble valley I despised
For intellectual heights unrealized!

VII.

" There came a sadder hour, not yet the last,
When thankfully I walked this lower vale,
Despite the mountain-shadow on me cast,
That brought to mind those struggles made to scale
The moral heights of a divine repose
Which, one by one, had vanished as they rose.

VIII.

"And now my listless thoughts can spell no more
  Heaven's secret ciphers, fondly beckoning
To lofty souls who seek the mountain-shore
  Of her ethereal seas, and bravely cling
Despite the laughter of the troublous wind,
And the dishonoured dust they leave behind.

IX.

"In youth when a beloved maiden's glance
  Could overbrim the present with content,
Would nature's rival charms in love advance,
  Saddening my soul while early days were spent;
And when the ruin of my hope was sure,
Passing away the younger to allure.

X.

"And while those glimpses of futurity,
  Which all must once inherit, yet were mine,—
I proudly deemed that were my soul to die
  Not heaven herself could longer be divine.
I seemed the heir of her untrodden strand
Which bloomed as never blossoms sea or land.

XI.

" And what a change is here! Death's chilly gust
  Is fanning into frost my stiffened sense.
When comes the frenzied hour let me mistrust
  My soul's delusions as it goeth hence!
The narrow pass is nigh, I creep beneath
That arch of ice and shiver into death.

XII.

"A polar winter with its cutting wind
  Wheels up the fallow mist and two-edged sleet.
It is the storm of death! May not my mind
  In dying, as in living, succour meet?
Even to the last the promised skies I see—
Thoughts that have been are still the thoughts that be.

XIII.

"Yes, those blue plains with many a flaky knoll
  Floating beyond the once snow-frozen heights,
I feel descend and pass into my soul
  Without whose lucid depths were nothing bright.
Nature still needs my all-embracing gaze
Lest suns be dark in her impervious haze.

XIV.

"Eolian lyres are planted in the sky;
The resurrectionary breezes sweep
Across the chords of early memory,
And long forgotten thoughts astonish sleep.
Departing spirits answer to their call:
Past days return, a moment holds them all.

XV.

"And heaven in unoffended beauty smiles:
The coloured waters of her flowery seas,
The obdurate mountain peaks, the distant isles,
Pass to my spirit with the living breeze.
The soul alone is the eternal law,
It is the light that once I only saw."

XVI.

Say not his soul expires; he coils his palms
  Across his head, his fingers from his brow
Are dripping with a peace that overcalms
  His inmost heart—and that is closing now.
He sleeps, one limb is o'er the other prest,
And his delirious dream is now at rest.

THE END.